

## **Attendance**

State statute requires that “All children who have attained or will have attained the age of six (6) years by February 1st of any school year and have not yet attained the age of sixteen (16) years, except as otherwise provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term.” (F.S. 1003.21)

It is the belief of the District School Board of Pasco County that academic success requires continuity of instruction and active classroom participation. Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in school during the days and hours that the school is in session. School attendance shall be the responsibility of parents and students.

School Attendance: Students are to be counted in attendance only if they are actually present or engaged in a school-approved educational activity, which constitutes a part of the instructional program for the student.

Class Attendance: Students are to be counted in attendance if they are physically present in class or have been excused by the teacher on a class-related assignment, or have been requested by a member of the school support staff for an approved school activity.

Florida Law 1003.26(1)(b) provides that if a student has at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a ninety (90) calendar day period, the school must take action. The school may require documented medical and legal excuses for a pattern of non-attendance.

- Attendance shall be counted period by period. (Secondary only)
- A student, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces and has been called to duty, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment, shall be granted additional excused absences, at the discretion of a school district’s superintendent or designee, to spend time with said student’s parent/guardian, relative to such leave or deployment.
- After three (3) unexcused absences the school shall contact the home (or work place) of the parent/guardian to determine the reason for the absence.

## Attendance Procedures

All elementary, middle and high school students who are absent will be marked “unexcused” (U) until the parent/guardian notifies the school in writing and justifies the absence with one of the acceptable reasons as defined below.

- Failure to do so within three (3) school days will cause the absence to be recorded as “unexcused”.
- In the case of excessive or extended absences, which are claimed to be due to illness, upon request of the principal or designee, a parent must provide documentation (doctor’s statement) of a student’s illness.
- Excessive or extended absences are considered five (5) in one calendar month or ten (10) in one semester, or a history of excessive absences per period as defined below under Student Consequences for Unexcused Absences. Absences that meet this threshold as defined above will require a doctor’s note. If doctor’s notes are not provided, absences will be marked as unexcused.

## Reasons for acceptable absences include but are not limited to:

- Illness of student
- Major illness in the immediate family of the student (immediate family is determined as parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, legal guardians or persons “in loco parentis,” or a member of one’s own household)
- Death in the immediate family of the student
- Religious holiday of the student’s faith (including Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Epiphany, etc.)
- Religious instruction (including Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, etc.)
- Religious institutes, conferences, or workshops, provided that the principal or designee approves the absence in advance
- Absences for trips or other parental requests
  - Requests must be approved at least one (1) week in advance
- In-school or out-of-school suspension
- Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency, a copy of the subpoena or court summons must be submitted to the school

- For purposes of attendance, school related activities would not be counted as absences from school.
- Issues and occasions specific to military families

#### Tardiness and Early Checkout

Students need to arrive on time and stay through dismissal so they will receive important directions, class instruction and avoid disrupting other students. Parents can set a good example by encouraging students to follow the school's time schedule and to follow the procedures found in the school handbook. All parents must report to the front office when picking up their child prior to the regular dismissal time.

#### Make-up Work

Students may make up any and all assignments, tests or related work assigned on the day(s) of any excused or unexcused absence at full credit.

The student is responsible for asking the teacher(s) for make up tests, assignments and related work. Students will be given a minimum of two (2) calendar days per day or period of absence to make up all tests, assignments and related work.

Students may be given additional time as stipulated on their IEP or based on teacher discretion. Work due to be turned in on the day of the absence will be turned in upon return and be given full credit.

Students who have been assigned out-of-school suspension (OSS) may make up all tests, assignments and related work for full credit.

#### Referrals for Intervention and Support

If the initial parent/guardian meeting/contact does not resolve the problem and the person responsible for all non-attendance, determines that an early pattern of non-attendance is developing, interventions that best address the problem will be developed. The interventions may include but need not be limited to:

- Attendance agreements.
- Referral to the school based intervention team.

If the attendance agreements and the referral to the school based intervention team are not successful, then a referral to the school social worker is initiated.

Once referred to the school social worker, a student and/or parent may be referred to the Office of the State Attorney's Truancy Intervention Program (TIP) or to Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS).

#### Truancy Prosecution

The Truancy Intervention Program (TIP) may prosecute through the State Attorney's Office (SAO) via the school attendance statute. A truancy referral through Youth and Family Alternatives (YFA) may also lead to prosecution via the CINS statute. (F.S. 1003.12, F.S. 984.03)

#### Driver License Penalty

Students who accumulate fifteen (15) unexcused absences or absences for which the reasons are unknown, in a period of ninety (90) calendar days may face suspension of their driver license, or for students who are under age sixteen (16), having their application for licensure denied. Please see section on Driver License Law below. (F.S. 322.091)

#### Public Assistance Penalty

Truancy may impact public assistance the family receives through the Learnfare program. (414.1251)

#### Intervention Systems

It is the expectation that schools will design and implement an attendance incentive program where students may earn additional rewards and privileges. School administrators may elect to exclude the following consequences for unexcused absences from their attendance plan.

#### Student Consequences for Unexcused Absences

At the secondary level, attendance is marked per period. If a student has at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, in any one course within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, in any one course within a semester, the student may lose privileges as described below.

At the elementary level, attendance is marked per day. Students who accumulate excessive absences, which is defined as five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, in any one calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, in any semester, tardies or early dismissals may lose privileges as described below.

#### Loss of Privileges Due to Unexcused Absences

- May be excluded from attendance reward incentives as defined at the school level.
- Lose the privilege of participating in extracurricular activities. These include but are not limited to dances, special events, club activities and athletics, until the end of the following grading quarter. **Absences accumulated in the fourth quarter will result in loss of privileges during said grading quarter only and will not carry over to the following year.**
- Lose the privilege to drive to campus until the end of the following grading quarter. **Absences accumulated in the fourth quarter will result in loss of privileges during said grading quarter only and will not carry over to the following year.**

The principal or designee may review extenuating circumstances resulting in a loss of privilege(s). The principal's decision is final. Principal review is only intended to reinstate privileges that have been lost as described above. It is not intended to impose harsher discipline than what is outlined herein and in other district policy.

#### Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Students must be present for the majority of the school day to participate in extracurricular activities unless otherwise approved by school administration. These include but are not limited to dances, special events, club activities and athletics.